



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



Summary

The Great Fire of London was a major fire that swept through London from Sunday 2nd September to Thursday 6th September 1666.

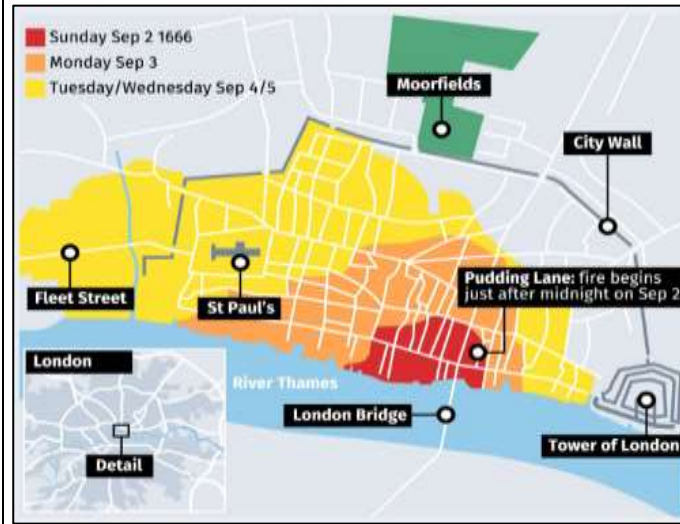
The fire destroyed:

- 13200 houses (the homes of 70,000 people);
- 87 parish churches;
- St. Paul's Cathedral;
- Many government buildings

The fire spread from a bakery on Pudding Lane to consume most of the medieval City of London. It threatened (but did not quite reach) Westminster, King Charles II's palace and the suburban slums

Only 6 deaths were reported: But, many historians think that there were lots of unrecorded deaths. The temperature of the fire may have reached 1,600°C!

Map showing the spread of the fire, between 2nd and 5th September 1666.



Answers to Important Questions

HOW DID THE FIRE START?		The fire started around 1am in Thomas Farriner's bakery, on Pudding Lane. The most likely cause was a spark from an oven falling onto something close by, probably flour sacks that were laying close by. The flame spread through the house, down Pudding Lane, and into the nearby streets.	Did you know? Despite the proof against him, Thomas Farriner always claimed that the fire was not his fault.
WHY DID THE FIRE SPREAD SO QUICKLY?		Many factors caused the fire to spread rapidly. Firstly, it had been a long and dry summer. Also, houses at the time were mostly made of wood, and were built very close together - a strong wind helped to blow the fire across them. Finally, the area was filled with flammable things like timber and oil.	Did you know? In 1979, 20 barrels of tar were found in the cellar of a shop on Pudding Lane. This would have spread the fire more quickly.
DID MANY PEOPLE DIE?		Official records show that only 6 people died in The Great Fire of London, although it is commonly thought to be more: The deaths of the poor were unlikely to have been recorded at the time. Furthermore, the temperature of the fire was so hot that there would be very little remains of those who perished.	Did you know? Some historians believe that several hundred people actually died in the Great Fire of London.
WHERE WAS THE MAYOR?		The Lord Mayor of London at the time was Si Thomas Bloodworth. When the fire started, those fighting it needed his permission to pull down nearby houses, to stop the fire spreading. However, he refused. As a result, he was widely blamed for not taking enough action to stop the fire.	Did you know? It was reported that after meeting about the fire, Bludworth seemed feint and retired to bed!
WHO PUT THE FIRE OUT?		There was no fire brigade in London at the time, and so Londoners had to try and put out the fire themselves, helped by local soldiers. They used leather buckets, water squirts, and fire hooks, to pull buildings down. On the 3 rd day, the wind began to drop and the fire-fighters gained control.	Did you know? From the 3 rd day onwards, gunpowder was used to bring down houses quick enough to control the fire.
WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS?		After the fire had been extinguished, investigations were held to find out its cause, the people who started it, and to make plans so that it couldn't happen again. The city began to be rebuilt, (King Charles gave Christopher Wren creative control of this) but this took around 50 years to rebuild.	Did you know? Houses were mostly rebuilt using brick, and were built further apart. Also, many streets were widened.
HOW DO WE KNOW ABOUT ALL OF THIS?		We know about what happened at the time because people wrote about it in newspapers and in letters (for example, Samuel Pepys' diary). Also, artists who were around at the time painted pictures of the fire as they remembered it.	Did you know? Perhaps the most famous painting of the fire was by Jan Griffier in 1666.

Key People



Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)

Samuel Pepys was a navy officer and a diary writer. He was in and around the city throughout the disaster, and his diaries give the most complete account of the tragedy. Pepys was staying ¼ of a mile away from Pudding Lane. He was awoken by his maid at 3am, but initially thought the fire was not serious, so he went back to bed!

Thomas Farriner (1615-1670)



Thomas Farriner was the owner of the bakery on Pudding Lane where the fire started. He was 'Conduct of the King's Bakehouse.' This meant that he had a contract to bake biscuits for the navy. Thomas Farriner and his children escaped the fire, but his maid perished in the flames. After the fire, he returned to work as a respected baker.



King Charles II (1630-1685)

Charles II was the King of England at the time of the fire. He had been an unpopular king before the fire, as many people considered him to be a lazy drunkard. However, his leadership in stopping the fire, and then making sure that the homeless were fed, improved his reputation. Some people have argued that he was not helpful because he cared, but because he feared that there may soon be an uprising!

Robert Hubert (1640-1666)



Robert Hubert was a watchmaker from France, who was executed after confessing to starting the fire. He claimed that he had started the fire by throwing a grenade through the window of the bakery. The authorities were keen to catch someone, and thought that he may be a spy. However, Hubert was in fact innocent, as it was later discovered that the fire was started accidentally.



Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723)

Sir Christopher Wren was one of the most respected architects at the time of the Great Fire of London. He was given the task of rebuilding the 52 of the churches that were destroyed by the fire. His masterpiece was the redesigned St Paul's cathedral, which became the tallest building in London from 1710 up until 1967. He was given a knighthood for his work rebuilding the city. Wren was a talented man, who was also a skilled mathematician and scientist. His scientific work was praised by Isaac Newton and Blaise Pascal!

Top 10 Facts!

1. Before the fire began, there had been a drought that had lasted for over 10 months!
2. People whose homes had burnt down lived in tents, in fields around London, until their houses were rebuilt.
3. Sir Christopher Wren designed a memorial for the Great Fire, which still stands today.
4. It took 6 years to build and is 61 metres high.
5. There were rumours Catholics or the French had started the fire, but these weren't true.
6. Samuel Pepys reported seeing smoke coming from London roofs 6 months after the fire!
7. King Charles gave rewards to people who were helping with putting out the fire.
8. When fire struck, London was still reeling from the plague, which had killed 100,000 people.
9. 436 acres of London were destroyed.
10. The first London home insurance company opened in 1680. 10 years later, 1 in 10 houses were insured.

Timeline of The Great Fire of London

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| 2 nd Sept 1666: 1am – The fire starts in a bakery in Pudding Lane | 7am – 300 houses have already been destroyed. | 3 rd Sept 1666: 9pm – Houses are pulled down to prevent the fire reaching the Tower of London | 4 th Sept 1666: 8pm – St. Paul's Cathedral catches fire. | 5 th Sept 1666: 2am – Buildings along the strand are blown up to prevent the fire spreading. | 6 th Sept 1666: 8am – The fire is officially extinguished. | 25 th Sept 1666: A committee is set up to look into what caused the fire. | 10 th Oct 1666: A day of fasting is held to commemorate the fire. | 27 th Oct 1666: Robert Hubert is hanged for starting the fire, but is later found to be innocent | 22 nd Jan 1667: The committee finds that the fire was in fact an accident. | 1677 – A monument to The Great Fire of London is finished. |
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